

A Moldavian Folk Tale



THE POT OF GOLD

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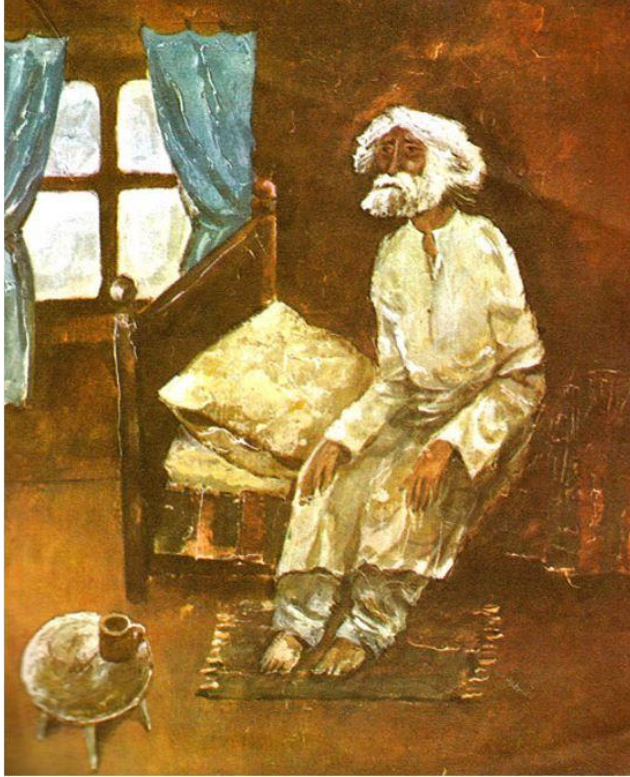
Once upon a time there lived a man who had three sons. He was a hardworking man and laboured from mom till night. But his sons did not take after their father. They were strong and healthy lads, all three, but terrible loafers who did not want to do anything at all.

The father worked in the field, in the garden and in the house, but his sons sat chatting in the shade under the trees or went to the Dniester for a day's fishing.



"Why do you never help your father?"
their neighbours asked.

"Why should we!" the sons replied.
"Father takes good care of us and does all
the work very well by himself."



And so it went from year to year.

The sons grew to manhood, and the father aged and could no longer work as before. The garden round the house ran wild and the field was overgrown with weeds. The sons saw this, but were so lazy that they would do nothing about it.

"Why do you sit there, my sons, idling the hours away?" their father would ask them. "I worked hard all my life, and now your turn has come to do the same."



But no matter what he said, his sons would not listen to him and did nothing but twiddle their thumbs.

So troubled was the old man that his sons were such loafers that he fell ill and took to his bed.

By now the family were in the direst need. Nettles and thistles grew so thick around the hut that it was barely visible.

One day the old man called his sons to his bedside.

"My end has come, my sons," said he. "How are you going to live without me, loafers that you are?"

The sons burst into tears.

"Give us your last counsel, Father," the eldest son begged. "Tell us what we are to do."



"Very well!" said the father. "I'll tell you a secret. You know that your mother and I toiled hard and ceaselessly. Over the years, bit by bit, we were able to put aside what we earned till we had a potful of gold. I buried the pot near the house, only I don't remember just where. Find it, and you will be rich and never know need."



With that he bade his sons goodbye and breathed his last.

The sons were deeply grieved and they wept and sorrowed for a long time. One day the eldest of them said:

"Well, brothers, we are poor indeed, we haven't even money enough to buy bread with. Let us do as our father bade before he died and look for the pot of gold."

They took their spades and began digging near the hut, they dug and they dug, but they could not find the pot of gold.



Said the middle brother:

"If we dig like this, my brothers, we will never find the pot. Let us dig up the ground all around the hut!"

The brothers agreed. They took up their spades again and they dug up the ground all around the hut, but no pot of gold did they find.

"Let us dig some more, but deeper," said the youngest brother. "Perhaps father buried the pot of gold deep down."

Once again the brothers agreed: they were very eager to find the pot.

They set to work, and the eldest brother, who had been digging a long time, suddenly felt his spade strike something quite big and hard. His heart pounding wildly, for he thought that he had found the pot of gold, he called to his brothers, to come to him quickly.

The two brothers came running and began helping their elder brother dig.

They worked very, very hard, but what they dug up from the ground was not a pot of gold, but a large stone.

The brothers were disappointed.

"What shall we do with the stone?" said they. "It's no use leaving it here. Let us carry it away and throw it in a gully."



No sooner said than done. They got rid of the stone and began digging again. They worked all day long, never stopping to eat or rest, and they dug up the whole of the garden. The soil under their spades became nice and soft, but for all their efforts no pot of gold did they find.

"Now that we have dug up the garden, it's no use leaving things as they are, let us plant grapevines here!" said the eldest brother.

"That's a good idea!" the two younger brothers agreed. "At least our labours will not have been wasted."

So they planted some grapevines and began tending them carefully.

A short time passed, and they had a fine, large vineyard where ripened good, juicy grapes.



The brothers gathered a rich harvest. They put aside the grapes they needed for themselves and sold the rest at a profit.

Said the eldest brother:

"It was not in vain, after all, that we dug up our garden for we found the treasure of which father spoke before he died."